36:14

PRELIMINARY COMMISSION

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Bishop of the Philippine Islands

WORLD CONFERENCE
ON
FAITH AND ORDER

Ἵνα πάντες ἓν ὦσι, καθὼς σύ, πάτερ, ἐν ἐμοὶ κἀγὼ ἐν σοί, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ἓν ὦσιν, ἵνα ὁ κόσμος πιστεύσῃ ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας.

Ut omnes unum sint, sicut tu Pater in me, et ego in te, ut et ipsi in nobis unum sint, ut credat mundus, quia tu me misisti.

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

PRELIMINARY COMMISSION

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Bishop of New York
Rt. Rev. P. M. Rhinelander, D.D., Philadelphia, Pa.
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Office of ROBERT H. GARDINER
Gardiner, Maine, U. S. A.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR:

UP to the 25th of last July, eighteen Commissions had been appointed by as many different Communions to coöperate in bringing about a World Conference for the consideration of questions touching Faith and Order. In a statement lately issued by the Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church, of which you will have received a copy, it was remarked that "formal association for joint action can be effected only after a sufficient number of commissions shall have been appointed and sufficient opportunity to appoint such commissions shall have been afforded to all Communions, both Catholic and Protestant." It is obvious that considerable time must elapse before responses can be expected from Churches in Europe and in other foreign parts of the World. The question arises whether those Commissions that have been appointed can make profitable use of the interval of waiting.

We are instructed on behalf of the Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church to suggest that each Commission can make good use of this time in fostering within its own Communion, a sentiment in favor of Unity. The Conference, when it meets, will be called on to study and discuss those things in which we differ, from the standpoint of those things in which we are at one. In order that such a discussion may be fruitful, it is important that the representatives of the several participating Communions shall feel conscious of a desire in the bodies who send them for the restoration of Christian Unity, and of an expectation in those bodies that a better understanding of the points of difference shall make easier their reconciliation.

The Conference will have no power to commit participating Communions upon any point, but it is desirable that their members should be prepared, by the cultivation of a sympathetic interest, to receive the results of a Conference in good will and with the disposition to proceed towards reunion rather than to seek reasons for rejecting it.

With a view to stimulating such a spirit, each Commission might advantageously take such steps now as it shall deem most suitable to its own circumstances. It has appeared to the Commis-

sion of the Protestant Episcopal Church that in general it would be advantageous to each Communion that its own Commission should, among other things, recommend:

a. To the clergy to preach upon the subject of Unity;

b. To both the clergy and the laity to study the distinctive tenets of Faith and Order which are understood to lie at the foundation of their position and to constitute the justification for their separateness;

c. That such studies be critical and thorough, in order that the subject may become well understood, and that the vital points for which the particular Communion stands as distinct from other bodies may be clearly distinguished from its general body of Christian doctrine;

d. That denominational standards of doctrine, where such exist, receive special attention, particularly in their relation to current teaching;

e. That the distinguishing doctrines of other Communions be examined, not for the purpose of disparaging them, but for the purpose of understanding their value to those who hold them;

f. Finally, and in order that these, or any, methods may be efficacious, that prayer be made habitually and systematically by clergy and by laity for the Unity of God's people and for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all efforts to bring about a World Conference.

It is believed that such studies and prayers will tend to diminish rather than to increase the divergence between Christian Communions. In some cases it may appear that the divergence lies in the proportion in which the same doctrine is held by different bodies in relation to other doctrines; in others, that the vital points of one Communion are not really incompatible with the standards of others; in still others, that the differences rest more in form than in substance. At all events, it may be hoped that the consideration of Christian people may be fixed upon those things which they deem essential, and that other points which are not vital, however highly they may be esteemed for other reasons, may be regarded as not presenting obstacles to the reunion of Christendom, but as suitable to be cherished by those who prize them without prejudice to divergent views of others. The more clearly points considered vital are expressed, the better they can be dealt with when the time shall come to discuss them in conference. Patient and candid study will tend to eliminate from the category of vital denominational tenets such things as are not in reality essential.

In submitting these suggestions to the several Commissions it is hoped that they will not be thought to proceed from a purpose of dictating any particular line of action. It seems, however, very desirable that while the Commissions are waiting until the time is ripe for concerted action, the interval may be employed for the advancement of the cause which we all have at heart, and it is respectfully urged upon the Commissions to take such action towards that end, within their several Communions, as they shall deem judicious.

The Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church is now engaged in efforts to obtain the co-operation of representative bodies of other Communions, and in carrying on preliminary work of preparation for the proposed World Conference. Meanwhile each Commission will be helped and encouraged in its own labors by the knowledge that the other Commissions are endeavoring, in their several methods, to make straight paths by which their respective Communions may approach the Conference with a lively hope that they will find our Lord and Saviour waiting for them there to show them His will.

Faithfully yours,

CHARLES P. ANDERSON, *Bishop of Chicago,*
PRESIDENT

January 6, 1912

Additional copies of this letter may be had on application to Robert H. Gardiner, Gardiner, Maine.